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CHAL-1160  
Copy 7 of 9

30 August 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR : Acting Chief, DPD

SUBJECT : Future Utilization of CHALICE Pilot Personnel

REFERENCE : CHAL-1152, dated 25 August 1960; Subject: "Security Ranking of CHALICE Drivers"

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1. I have been mulling over the conclusion reached in paragraph one of the reference, wherein [ ] recommends that all present CHALICE pilots be terminated and [ ] new ones recruited from SAC assets. His key conclusion: "... The intimate knowledge possessed by present Project CHALICE pilots concerning Agency operations, locations, and personnel makes their continued usage for overflight missions inconsistent with sound security practice," is one with which I am reluctantly forced to agree. However, as a practical matter, [ ] has then understandably diluted this recommendation by stating that: "If it is concluded that it would not be feasible to recruit new pilots. . . the provisions of Operations Policy Letter 12 be utilized in screening those to be retained." I should like to reflect briefly upon this whole matter.

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2. The major problem presented by the downing of Frank Powers on May first was the staggering amount of knowledge he theoretically could have possessed by virtue of his extended stay at Adana. In addition, because he had been so long in our midst, he knew probably more Agency personalities than any other U-2 pilot who could have fallen into Soviet hands. There was reasonable suspicion that he had become aware of other Agency air operations of a clandestine nature, through his friendship with other CHALICE pilots, themselves participants in such operations. The easy and informal atmosphere at [ ] where he was a very frequent visitor because of extensive dental work being done in Germany, was such that he undoubtedly became aware of the activities of [ ] then stationed there. We could only hope that he retained little of his cumulative store of information, but as we examined the records, it became apparent that we might have rested easier had someone else been in Frank's shoes.

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3. When we finally went to the lengths of having all other CHALICE pilots set down on paper what and who they knew in CIA and DPB, it took little effort to discover that there was what might be called "an average profile of knowledge" about CIA's business and personnel that was anything but reassuring. For example, at a minimum there was knowledge about the Agency's interest in other fields of reconnaissance, including some fairly detailed ideas of our part in Project OXCART. Nearly every pilot knew most of the key Agency figures in CHALICE and the Clandestine Services; certainly the headquarters location of CHALICE was accurately known, as were details of our working relationships with various other Governmental components, including the Air Force elements responsible for supporting us. These facts remain in the minds of these pilots today, and in all probability they know more than they actually admitted to on paper.

4. If we are in earnest then about the possibility of utilizing the U-2 again at some future date within the lifespan of Project CHALICE, and if these plans include the possibility of flying over the Soviet Union, I submit that we must take into account the possibility of repeating the Powers' incident with perhaps far more damaging results if the pilot is captured. Kelly Johnson, shortly after the incident this year, suggested that we move to devise a destruct mechanism ten times more powerful than that in Powers' plane (in other words, [redacted] and that this be constructed so as to work on the proximity principle whenever the mission was over Soviet territory. Presumably this could be accomplished through some sort of manual arming mechanism. Were we in possession of such a capability, and were we assured that it would work when we wanted it to and not in the traffic pattern after return from a mission, I would feel much more secure in thinking about Soviet overflights with the present group of pilots. Without it, I think it could only be a matter of time before even such a thing as an emergency landing in a so-called "friendly" country might produce grave problems for us, especially with regard to future activities of CIA. Would a pilot landing, say in [redacted] be immune from detention, interrogation, or torture? It is almost certain that he would be detained long enough to be "questioned" were he to land anywhere in [redacted] and with the knowledge made public all over the world as a result of publicity afforded Powers, the interrogators would not have to waste time asking questions about non-essentials, but could really start from where the Powers' public trial record left off. I then am of the view that we are sticking our head in the sand to move ahead with plans for Soviet overflights or even so-called "peripheral" collection flights using the present membership. Granted that the emergence of some fast-breaking international situation might cause us to evaluate this risk in different terms, where we would say that the risk of capture and interrogation was one that would have to be taken to achieve the greater goal of obtaining critical information, I see no reason for permitting an insecure situation to continue when we theoretically have the time to make other plans.

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5. What I have said does not mean that this situation can be resolved in black and white simply by recruiting new pilots from Del Rio. There is a distinct chance that some surprisingly accurate information on Project OXCART may be in being at that installation, based on unverified reports flowing from there. However, we would cut the risk of information being passed about Agency structure, organization, and personalities, as well as other clandestine activities, to a bare minimum by getting some new faces into the CHALICE Project. Certainly we cannot afford to conduct a whole new training program in the U-2 at Edwards Air Force Base for pilots unfamiliar with the plane, and if Del Rio is a place where useful information on Project OXCART can be picked up, it would avail us little to train new pilots at that location. Therefore, I reach the almost inescapable conclusion that if we are to fly the U-2 against the Soviet Union, or if we are flying it adjacent to that country, over the Soviet Bloc countries or over countries in sympathy with the Soviet Union, we are bound to take steps without delay to acquire new pilots from SAC for the job. By the same token, if [ ] continues, we should change the pilots there--a move which has been planning now for some time. If you concur, I will discuss this question with Colonel Geary to obtain Air Force views and with anyone else you may direct.

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SIGNED

JAMES A. CUNNINGHAM, JR.  
Assistant Chief  
DPD-DD/P

JAN 10 1960

CONCUR:

STANLEY W. BEERLI  
Colonel, USAF  
Acting Chief, DPD-DD/P

Date

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